

TRANSFER OF WILLIAM S. HART PARK TO THE CITY OF SANTA CLARITA

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has a long and purposeful history of being a steward of historically significant and unique estates bequeathed to DPR for preservation and for the education and enjoyment by the general public. In 1946, silent film actor and director William S. Hart at his request and in his "Will" deeded his beloved ranch and home to the County to be established as a public park and museum, free to the public.

For nearly eight decades, DPR has been the steward of William S. Hart Regional Park (Hart Park), investing millions of dollars in public infrastructure to the park, serving hundreds of thousands of visitors and providing specialty programming. This includes regional and countywide festivities such as the 39th Annual Pow Wow, where DPR, in collaboration with the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, hosts one of the region’s largest gatherings of Indigenous peoples.

Hart Park is an expansive park complex and museum site, which DPR has successfully operated and maintained for more than 75 years. This unique recreational and historic resource contains more than 30 buildings and structures. Over the years, DPR has committed millions of dollars to help preserve the historic resources at this site and to make capital improvements to the park, including substantial improvements to the barnyard and to the perimeter fencing surrounding the park. DPR offers a large variety of free programs at Hart Park with broad appeal to the public. This programming reflects the surrounding community’s character and promotes accessibility and interaction among a diverse cross section of the public.

-MORE-

MOTION

SOLIS _____

MITCHELL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

HORVATH _____

In addition, Hart Park is the location of DPR's largest animal ambassador and barnyard program. The park contains a herd of bison that have been under the care of DPR staff at Hart Park since 1962, and a barnyard that houses various live animals including: llamas, alpacas, chickens, swans, ducks, geese, rabbits, pheasants, deer, horses, donkeys, pigs, and tortoises, which provide families and youth an opportunity to connect to urban barns and animal husbandry. For nearly six decades, DPR animal keepers have been stewards of one of the largest urban bison herds, who average longer lifespans than other bison living in captivity.

Furthermore, the William S. Hart mansion was transformed into a museum, which is operated in partnership with the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum (NHM). DPR has successfully operated and maintained this unique recreational and historic resource for more than 75 years.

The original bequest from William S. Hart included certain real property ("Trust Property"), personal property ("Trust Collection"), and a trust fund ("Trust Fund"). By the terms of the bequest, the County holds title in the Trust Property, Trust Collection, and Trust Fund in trust for the benefit of the general public. The bequest required in part : (1) the Trust Property shall always be maintained as a public park; (2) the Trust Property shall be named "William S. Hart Park"; (3) no admittance fee shall be charged; (4) no business activities or mineral extraction shall be allowed on the Trust Property; (5) the Trust Property designated as a part of the museum facilities shall be maintained in its current location and kept in good repair; and (6) a guard shall protect the museum's Trust Collection when open to the public. The County has two funds associated with Hart Park. They are the William S. Hart Endowment Inc. Fund (Fund K01), which is managed by the Auditor-Controller and the Hart Park Special Development Fund (Fund CA5/SD10), which is managed by DPR.

Over the years, DPR subsequently also acquired additional park property surrounding William S. Hart Park in fee title ("Expansion Properties"). The Expansion Properties include the Senior Center parcel(s) located to the West of the Trust Property, and the parcel that includes Heritage Junction to the East of the Trust Property. The County also acquired and created associated items with the Trust Collection ("Associated Trust Collection Items").

the City of Santa Clarita (City) was incorporated in 1987. The Trust Property and Expansion Properties are now located within the City. The County supports the role of cities to provide local park and recreational programming within municipal boundaries. The City has agreed to take ownership of, and responsibility for, William S. Hart Park, Expansion Properties, Trust Collection, and Associated Trust Collection Items, subject to the bequest and its restrictions. Furthermore, the City has agreed to contribute the amount commensurate to the County's estimated costs for the transfer (up to \$200,000).

-MORE-

DPR fully expects that the City will continue to prioritize equity and access for all residents of the County and will commit the appropriate resources to maintain the high standards of stewardship established by DPR. DPR will provide the City an animal welfare plan to guide the caretaking of the animal residents at Hart Park. The City will ensure that all animal residents will live out their natural lives at Hart Park, without threat of transfer or euthanasia that is not medically necessary, and the City will adopt the County's Animal Welfare Plan for the animal residents of William S. Hart Park to ensure that the continuity of care for Hart Park's beloved animal residents will remain consistent during and long after the transition.

The transfer of the Trust Property, Trust Collection, and Trust Fund to the City shall require approval of the probate court in order to substitute the City as the new trustee. Pursuant to Probate Code section 17200, the County, as the current trustee, may petition the probate court to transfer trusteeship and legal title to the City.

The transfer of these park properties to the City, including the Expansion Properties and Associated Trust Collection Items, is authorized by Government Code section 25550.5. Pursuant to section 25550.5, upon unanimous vote of the Board, the County may convey County park property and personal property located in a city to the city upon finding that the property is local in character and the city agrees to maintain the park and personal property for the benefit and use of all residents of the county. The transfer of the Trust Collection and Associated Trust Collection Items to the City is authorized by Public Resources Code section 5123. Pursuant to this section, the County may deaccession objects in accordance with customary museum practices.

The proposed transfer is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") because it is excluded from the definition of a project by Public Resources Code section 21065 and State CEQA Guidelines sections 15378(b)(4) and (5). The transfer would convey County property to the City with no change in use (an organizational and administrative government action), with the City providing funding for the County's costs for the transfer of property. This would not result in a direct or indirect physical change to the environment or result in potentially significant physical impact to the environment, respectively.

Alternatively, the proposed transfer is within certain classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment in that it meets the criteria set forth in State CEQA Guidelines section 15325(f) and Class 25 of the County's Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines, Appendix G, because the project consists of acquisition, sale or other transfer to preserve open space or lands for park purposes. In addition, based on the record, the proposed

-MORE-

transfer will comply with all applicable regulations, and there are no cumulative impacts, unusual circumstances, damage to scenic highways, listing on hazardous waste site lists compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5, or indication that it may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource that would make the exemption inapplicable. Upon approval of the proposed transfer, DPR will file a Notice of Exemption (Notice) with the County Clerk pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21152 and will post the Notice to the County's website pursuant to Public Resources Code section 20192.2.

The positions currently assigned to Hart Park will be transferred to the Natural Areas Division of DPR, which has had a long-standing gap in the staffing resources necessary to oversee the 16 wildlife sanctuaries, nine nature centers, and more than 6,200 acres of parkland set aside for conservation throughout the County. DPR's wildlife sanctuaries play a critical role in the County's overall conservation efforts to help protect threatened and endangered flora and fauna such as burrowing owls and Joshua trees, which are endemic to the Antelope Valley but have suffered severe habitat loss due to development and the harmful impacts of climate change. DPR works in partnership with Native American Tribes in the management of open spaces to ensure the County's cultural and natural resources within these parklands are protected and cared for in a responsible manner. In addition, the Natural Areas division cares for more than 200 animal ambassadors that are housed in our nature centers and include native birds, mammals, reptiles, and invertebrates that bring nature education to life and play a pivotal role as stewards for their species. The staffing resources from Hart Park that will be transferred to the Natural Areas division will also address the gap in needed staffing resources for the Tameobit Sanctuary, which involves a partnership with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and the Tataviam.

Interest in nature and nature related experiences has grown exponentially since the pandemic as DPR has seen a 300% increase in visitation to our Natural Areas. The staffing resources at Hart Park include 14 budgeted positions, including Regional Park Superintendent II, Recreation Services Supervisor, Park Animal Keeper, Grounds Maintenance Worker I (4), Grounds Maintenance Worker II, Senior Grounds Maintenance Worker, Custodian, Senior Typist Clerk, Permanent Recreation Services Leader, recurrent Recreation Services Leader, and Park Aide (2).

These positions, currently assigned to support Hart Park and the Regional Agency operations, will be re-assigned to serve the Natural Areas Division of DPR, which provides protection for the County's natural resource areas and nature education programs in all five supervisorial districts. The Park Animal Keeper is one of only two positions in this classification that provide support to DPR's animal care programs, such as the new San Dimas Raptor Rescue center that serves the whole county and helps to rehabilitate sick, injured, and orphaned birds so that they can be released into the wild in an effort to strengthen the biodiversity throughout the region.

-MORE-

I, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Find that the proposed transfer of the Trust Property, Expansion Properties, Trust Collection, Associated Trust Collection Items, and Trust Fund to the City of Santa Clarita is not a project under CEQA, or in the alternative is exempt from CEQA, for the reasons stated in this Board Motion and in the record.
2. Find that the Trust Property and Expansion Properties are local in character, pursuant to Government Code section 25550.5.
3. Find that the Trust Property and Expansion Properties proposed to be conveyed to the City for use by the City as a public park is exempt surplus land, pursuant to Government Code section 54221(f)(1)(D) and, therefore, not subject to the requirements for the disposition of surplus land, pursuant to the California Surplus Land Act.
4. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Director of Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), or their designees to submit a copy of the Surplus Land Act exemption determination to the California Department of Housing and Community Development at least 30 days prior to the transfer pursuant to Section 400(e) of the Surplus Land Act Guidelines.
5. Approve the gratis transfer of the County of Los Angeles' (County) right, title, and interest in the Trust Property, Expansion Properties, Trust Collection, and Associated Trust Collection Items to the City, pursuant to Government Code section 25550.5.
6. Direct the Natural History Museum (NHM) Board of Governors to deaccession the Trust Collection and Associated Trust Collection Items, pursuant to Public Resources Code sections 5120 et seq. and any relevant authorities including without limitation NHM deaccession policies, contingent upon probate court approval and a transfer agreement execution.
7. Approve and authorize County Counsel to take all appropriate actions, including filing a petition in probate court, to nominate the City of Santa Clarita as the new trustee for the Trust Property, Trust Collection, and Trust Fund and to remove the County as a trustee and authorize the transfer of the trust corpus to the City of Santa Clarita.

-MORE-

8. Delegate authority to the Director of DPR, or her designee, and the Director of NHM, or her designee, to execute a transfer agreement with the City to: (1) transfer, by quit claim deed, fee title of the Expansion Parcels, including the Senior Center and Heritage Junction property to the City; (2) assign any grant responsibilities on the Trust Property and Expansion Properties to the City (including executing an assumption agreement with the Regional Parks and Open Space District and State of California); (3) transfer ownership of, and responsibility for, the various animals and livestock at the parks to the City without County's obligation or guarantee; (4) lease back a portion of the Expansion Property for the County's use as a facility yard for up to a five year term on a gratis basis. The City may terminate the lease with 180-day notice provided they have secured funding, permits, and have a contractor who is ready to break ground and (5) transfer the Trust Collection and Associated Trust Collection Items.
9. Subject to the appropriate transfer agreements and upon probate court approval, delegate authority to the CEO, Director of DPR, and the Director of NHM, or their designee, to execute the appropriate Quitclaim Deed(s) and any other documents necessary to complete the conveyance of the Trust Property, Trust Collection, Trust Fund, Expansion Properties, Associated Trust Collection Items, and livestock to the City.
10. The transfer of the Trust Property shall be made subject to the City's compliance with the provisions of the bequest of William S. Hart and the County's standard deed restrictions for the transfer of public parks, including: (1) the City shall operate and maintain the property as a public park in perpetuity; (2) the property shall be for the benefit and use of all residents of the County of Los Angeles and that there shall be no discrimination against, or preference, gratuity, benefit, bonus, or other benefit granted to residents of the City not also equally accorded to the residents of the County; and (3) the County may enforce these conditions by several means including revision of the property to the County.
11. The transfer of the Senior Center Property shall be made subject to the following restrictions: (1) the property shall be for the benefit and use of all residents of the County of Los Angeles and that there shall be no discrimination against, or preference, gratuity, benefit, bonus, or other benefit granted to residents of the City not also equally accorded to the residents of the County; (2) the Senior Center Property shall be maintained as a public community and recreational center and for programs for arts and veterans; and (3) the County may enforce these conditions by several means including revision of the property to the County.

-MORE-

12. The transfer of the remaining Expansion Properties shall be subject to the County's standard deed restrictions for the transfer of public parks, including: (1) the City shall operate and maintain the property as a public park in perpetuity; and (2) that the property shall be for the benefit and use of all residents of the County of Los Angeles and that there shall be no discrimination against, or preference, gratuity, benefit, bonus, or other benefit granted to residents of the City not also equally accorded to the residents of the County.
13. Delegate authority to the CEO, Director of DPR, and Director of NHM, or their designees, to execute, amend, and terminate a contribution funding agreement with the City for the actual expenditures incurred, currently estimated at two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) as for the County's (including DPR, CEO, and NHM) costs associated with the transfer of Hart Park, the Trust Collection, Associated Trust Collection Items, and Trust funds.
14. Authorize the CEO, Director of DPR, the Director of NHM, or their designees, to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transfer, and any amendments, upon approval as to form by County Counsel.
15. Approve the attached appropriation adjustment for DPR's Operating Budget to increase Services and Supplies appropriation, currently estimated at \$200,000 for the actual costs incurred associated with the transfer of Hart Park, the Trust Collections, and Trust funds, fully offset by the revenue from City's contribution.
16. Direct the CEO to work with the Director of DPR, or their designees, to reassign 14.0 existing budgeted positions and associated ordinance positions, formerly assigned to William S. Hart Park in DPR's Operating Budget, which includes 1.0 Regional Park Superintendent II, 1.0 Recreation Services Supervisor, 1.0 Park Animal Keeper, 4.0 Grounds Maintenance Worker I, 1.0 Grounds Maintenance Worker II, 1.0 Senior Grounds Maintenance Worker, 1.0 Custodian, 1.0 Senior Typist Clerk, 1.0 permanent Recreation Services Leader, 1.0 recurrent Recreation Services Leader and 2.0 recurrent Park Aide, to support the Natural Areas operation which have significant unmet needs for similar positions, in order to address critical and longstanding gaps in the DPRs stewardship of wildlife sanctuaries, nature centers, natural areas and the San Dimas Raptor Rescue, serving and benefitting residents in all supervisorial districts.
17. Authorize the Auditor-Controller and the Director of DPR to transfer the responsibility of trust funds to the City upon approval from the probate court and issue the final statement of receipts and disbursement.
18. Delegate and Authorize the CEO, or her designee, to Grant a utility easement to the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency to operate and maintain pipelines on the expansion Property.

#

July 29, 2024

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENT

PARKS AND RECREATION

AUDITOR-CONTROLLER:

THE FOLLOWING APPROPRIATION ADJUSTMENT IS DEEMED NECESSARY BY THIS DEPARTMENT. PLEASE CONFIRM THE ACCOUNTING ENTRIES AND AVAILABLE BALANCES AND FORWARD TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR HER RECOMMENDATION OR ACTION.

**ADJUSTMENT REQUESTED AND REASONS THEREFORE
FY 2024-25
4-VOTES**

SOURCES

USES

PARKS AND RECREATION
A01-PK-91-9021-27640
OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES
INCREASE REVENUE

200,000

PARKS AND RECREATION
A01-PK-2000-27640
SERVICES & SUPPLIES
INCREASE APPROPRIATION

200,000

SOURCES TOTAL \$ **200,000**

USES TOTAL \$ **200,000**

JUSTIFICATION

The steward of William S. Hart Regional Park will transfer to the City of Santa Clarita. This appropriation adjustment reflects an increase in Services & Supplies and Revenue in the amount of \$200,000 for the actual costs incurred by DPR, associated with the transfer of Hart Park, the Trust Collections, Associated Trust Collection Items, and Trust funds, fully offset by funding contribution from the City of Santa Clarita under the authority of an executed funding agreement.

ADOPTED

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

11 August 6, 2024

Carolyn Bernardez

Digitally signed by Carolyn Bernardez
Date: 2024.08.01 09:54:28 -07'00'

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

Carolyn Bernardez, Chief Financial Officer

BOARD OF SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL (AS REQUESTED/REVISED)

EDWARD YEN
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

REFERRED TO THE CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR---

ACTION

RECOMMENDATION
Lan Sam
Digitally signed by
Lan Sam
Date: 2024.08.01
17:03:17 -07'00'

AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

BY

DATE **8/1/24**

APPROVED AS REQUESTED

APPROVED AS REVISED

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**Christine
Frias**

BY

DATE **8/5/24**

Digitally signed by
Christine Frias
Date: 2024.08.05
10:09:43 -07'00'

B.A. NO. **015**